

# Sample Specialty Crop Competitive Grant

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Lettuce Trials

**Contact Information:**

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## Alaska Grown Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

### SAMPLE PROPOSAL

#### Problem Statement

As a producer trying to tap into the food service industry in Alaska, I have had difficulty finding a lettuce variety that both performs well in Alaska and is desirable to Chefs. Interest in buying local and supporting Alaska Grown farmers seems to be on the rise. This project is both timely and important because it will identify lettuce varieties that meet the needs of both the producer and the end users which could potentially increase the utilization of Alaska Grown in the food service industry.

#### Goals & Objectives

This project will develop a valuable resource for all farmers' market managers in Alaska, both established, start-up and potential managers. All farmers' market managers, vendors, and potential participants will directly benefit from the development of this guide book.

##### Goal #1

Identify 15 lettuce varieties that perform well in Alaska.

Objectives for goal #1

- Perform variety trials, tracking all costs including input needs, pests, yield, etc.
- Prepare a written report including professional quality photos of growth stages, maturity dates, harvest characteristics, post-harvest handling performance, etc.

##### Goal #2

Rank the top 15 varieties by Chefs preferences.

Objectives for goal #2

- Perform taste testing evaluations with at least 10 professional Alaska Chefs.
- Prepare a written report documenting all comments, rankings and preferences.

##### Goal #3

Increase familiarity amongst Alaska Grown lettuce farmers and Alaska Chefs.

Objectives for goal #3

- Host an "Alaska Grown Lettuce Day" event on the farm.
- Invite area farmers to tour the test plots.
- Invite Chefs to share their comments and preferences with the growers.
- Enhance the knowledge of at least 15 producers about preferred lettuces.

#### Project Description

As soon as funds are awarded, work will begin on the project.

Perform variety trials, tracking all costs including input needs, pests, yield, etc.

- First I will poll 15 Alaska lettuce producers to identify lettuce varieties that they are currently using. This will eliminate unnecessary research.

- I will purchase 30 different seed types for the variety trials. Joe Smith of UAF has agreed to perform the variety trials on my farm to ensure scientific results. A letter of support from Joe Smith is attached.

Prepare a written report including professional quality photos of growth stages, maturity dates, harvest characteristics, post-harvest handling performance, etc.

- Joe Smith of UAF has also agreed to assist me in creating the written report that will document the variety trials.

Perform taste testing evaluations with at least 10 professional Alaska Chefs.

- 10 Alaska Chefs have agreed to participate in a taste test event to help evaluate which lettuce varieties present desired characteristics including flavor, color, texture, shape and size. A list of the 10 chefs is attached.

Prepare a written report documenting all comments, rankings and preferences.

- I have created a score sheet with guidance from Barb Jones of the Alaska Culinary Institute. All 10 chefs have agreed to provide feedback with the form. After completion of the taste test event, all of the score sheet information will be compiled into a written report. Barb Jones has agreed to compile the information using industry standards. An email expressing her support of the project is attached.

Host an “Alaska Grown Lettuce Day” event on the farm.

- The 10 chefs have agreed to participate in the Lettuce Day activities at the farm including taste testing and evaluating all 30 varieties. They will also participate in the ‘meet & greet’ with the farmers who attend.

Invite area farmers to tour the test plots.

- I will work with Division of Agriculture staff to identify growers in the south central area to invite to the Lettuce Day event. I will prepare and send an email invitation as well as create a poster to be distributed to CES offices and linked to the Division’s online calendar.

Invite Chefs to share their comments and preferences with the growers.

- I will ask the Chefs to each pick a lettuce to highlight to the group of growers, discussing what qualities make it the most desirable or the food service industry.

Enhance the knowledge of at least 15 producers about preferred lettuces.

- The farmers that come to the Alaska Grown Lettuce Day will participate in pre and post surveys. The pre-survey will gauge their knowledge in different lettuce varieties, lettuces they currently use, etc. The post-survey will gauge their understanding after being at the event. Six months following the Lettuce Day, the farmers will be contacted again to determine if they have made any changes to their planning for the next growing year as a result of the project. Questions will be targeted to gather information about sales to the food service industry as well.

The timeline for completing the above is:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Goals</u>
Oct – Dec	Poll farmers for lettuce

	varieties. Order seeds and variety trial supplies.
Jan – Mar	
Apr – Jun	Plant lettuce seeds.
Jul – Sep	Conduct research. Host Lettuce Day.
Oct – Dec	Draft written reports.
	Contact farmers with follow-up questions. Release final findings and report. Present findings at Produce Growers Conference.
Jan – Mar	
Apr – Jun	Complete final report.

### Measurable Outcomes

Success of the project will be measured in a number of ways:

- The written report documenting the research trials will be available by request only to allow me to track the number of farmers who request the information. I anticipate at least 15 producers will request the information.
- The written report documenting the taste-test information will be available by request only to allow me to track the number of people who request the information. I anticipate that at least 15 producers and 15 chefs will request the information.
- The Alaska Grown Lettuce Day event will be considered a success if at least 15 producers attend. 10 chefs have already agreed to participate in the taste-test and evaluation portion of the event. Additional chefs will be invited. The event will be considered a success if at least 10 additional chefs participate.
- Pre and post surveys of the farmers who attend the Lettuce Day will be gathered. This project will be considered a success if 7 of these farmers make changes to the varieties they grow based on the information gathered in this project.

### Budget

Cost Category	Requested Dollars
Personnel (salary and benefits)	4400
Supplies (printing, mailing, etc)	5600
TOTALS:	\$10,000

Budget Description:

#### Personnel:

**Field Trial Research:** 200 hours x \$20/hour \$4000

This is representative half of the time Joe Smith estimated it would take to conduct these research trials. UAF has agreed to pay half of his time for the project.

**Taste Test Research:** 20 hours x \$20/hour \$400

#### Supplies:

**Seeds** 30 varieties \$1000

Shipping	\$50
Compost & Fertilizer	\$1000
Row cover	\$2000
Field trial tools: stakes, clipboards, lettuce knives, harvest totes	\$500
Document preparation supplies: printer cartridge, photo paper	\$500
Taste test supplies: knives, plates clipboards	\$550

April 21, 2012

Dear Mrs Pettit,

My name is Joe Smith and I am a research technician at UAF. I am excited to support Tom Jones Lettuce Trial project. I have extensive knowledge in field trial design and implementation as well as report writing. I look forward to this opportunity to assist Alaska Grown producers in their efforts to expand their markets.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [JoeSmith@abc.com](mailto:JoeSmith@abc.com)

Sincerely,  
Joe Smith

My name is Barb Jones and I am the director of the Alaska Culinary Institute(ACI). We do a variety of Chef trainings, product testing and other food service related activities at ACI. I look forward to working with Tom Jones on his Lettuce Trial project. This effort is the first of its kind and could prove to be quite instrumental in increasing the use of Alaska Grown products in area restaurants. I am impressed with the list of Chefs that Tom has compiled and look forward to meeting the producers.

Sincerely,  
Barb Jones

List of participating Chefs:

Chef Paul Simon  
 Chef Dave Matthews  
 Chef Hank Williams Jr.  
 Chef Willie Nelson  
 Chef Alison Krauss  
 Chef Martina McBride  
 Chef John Cash  
 Chef John Mayer  
 Chef Jewel  
 Chef Jason Aldean